

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

succeeded, the Central Powers could project an offensive across the Caspian into Turkestan and Afghanistan and eventually kindle a flame of anti-British revolt in India.

THE BRITISH EXPEDITION TO BAKU

To the British the situation created by the defection of Russia seemed alarming. At the beginning of the war the responsibility of containing the eastern Turkish front had been divided between the British and the Russians. The northern sector, Armenia and Kurdistan, had been the Russian responsibility; the southern, involving the invasion of Mesopotamia from the Persian Gulf, had been the British assignment. As long as tsardom existed, this plan was honestly fulfilled by both allies. The Russian gains in Turkey have already been mentioned. On the British side, General Maude's expeditionary force had landed in Basra and, after a prolonged campaign, had driven the Turks out of Bagdad in 1917. Thereafter it continued its march northwards toward Mosul. Thus the gap between Russian and British forces had been gradually narrowed, and a solid barrier against any further penetration by the Turkish forces toward the east had almost been completed. Then the collapse of the Russian front, as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution, presented an entirely new problem to the British. The task before the British Headquarters in Bagdad was to prevent the Turks and the Germans from penetrating the Caucasus and establishing a stronghold on the Caspian Sea. The difficulty of the British task becomes evident if we recall that the former Russian sector had been held by several excellent divisions. It was clear that Britain, faced with German concen-

trations on the French front in Europe as a result
of the Soviet-
German Armistice, could spare few troops for the
Middle Eastern
campaign. Yet the situation demanded urgent
measures. It was met
with courage and determination. In January, 1918, an
expeditionary
force was organized in Mesopotamia under Major-
General L. C.
Dunsterville. Comprising fourteen officers and
forty-one trucks,
whose drivers were the only reserve manpower,
Dunsterville's
motorized cavalcade was ordered to proceed via
Khanaqin on the
Mesopotamian-Iranian border, Kermanshah,
Hamadan, Qazvin, and
the province of Gilan to the Iranian port of Enzeli
(now Pahlavi) on

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